Interview with Anne Martindell

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AMBASSADOR ANNE MARTINDELL

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[Ms. Mullin was part of a State Department periodic inspection team that visited New Zealand during Ambassador Martindell's tenure.]

Q: Anne Martindell was the ambassador to New Zealand from 1979 to 1981. Madam Ambassador, while we will be concentrating on policy issues and your recollections of events while you were in New Zealand, would you give us first of all a background, and overall view of your earlier life, what you were doing prior to your appointment?

MARTINDELL: The reason I am writing this book is because I ran into a young woman, in Washington when I was Director of the office for Foreign Disaster Assistance, my immediate job. I was at a dinner party and I asked her in conversation what she did, she was about thirty-four. She got very incensed and said “I am looking after a little four year-old girl.” I said, “That is wonderful.” Her eyes filled with tears and she said, “You have no idea how few people say this to me.” My contemporaries all say, “what are you doing?” and when I say I am looking after my daughter it is clear they think it is boring! So I explained what I did and why I did it, I had stayed home and looked after my children until my youngest was thirteen, then I figured I could do something. A friend of mine, who

was running an independent primary school, said she had run into a new kind of reading instruction and she was going to start it in her school and wanted me to teach it. I said, “I have had no training”, and she said, “That is exactly what I want, you won't be prejudiced”. So having started teaching and ending up by teaching other teachers, before I got through with it, I realized that you do not have to have a thousand degrees, you don't have to have years and years of training, if you have got the courage, lots of courage, to tackle something in which you have no training, and you master it, you can do anything. So I went on from there.

Following that, my brother was campaign manager for Gene McCarthy. He and I were both very anti the Vietnam War. We felt that it was a political mistake, the wrong war in the wrong place. It was through that experience that I got into politics. Bob Meyner was running for governor for the third time around in 1969 and I went to his '67 convention in Chicago as an observer. In 1968 it was horrible, it was a mess. Helen Meyner suggested that he make me a vice chairman of the Democratic party in New Jersey and maybe I would bring the liberals around. I know that I did not bring enough of the them, as he did not win. That got me interested, I had been brought up on politics. I said in New Zealand that my father was a judge that was why I was interested in politics. They said that judges were not supposed to be political. He was not political, he was appointed but was very interested in politics. So I did that for four years. I was absolutely horrified at the attitude of the men towards the women. They were mostly ethnic types, they were jolly good fellows, but they thought that all that women were capable of doing was to pass the coffee and lick the stamps. I used to make speeches saying women are people, because they did not believe they were people. There were poor old ladies who had worked for years, here I was new, and had never worked for the party, any party. There was some resentment to the fact that I was given that post.

Anyway at the end of that four years the local party chairman came to me and said, “We have had a real problem here, the man who is in the state senate seat is very popular and

nobody is willing to run against him, would you do it? You can't win, but you might enjoy the campaign." I did enjoy the campaigning and I did win, narrowly.

Q: What years were you in the state senate?

MARTINDELL: Seventy-three to seventy-seven. Then the Republicans planned to run a new person against me. They put up their most popular candidate. I was right for Princeton, I was not right for the rest of the district, which went up in those days into Hunterdon County, which is very, very conservative. They liked me personally, but they did not like my political ideas at all. I also was getting terribly frustrated. I was concentrating on education, I was vice chairman of the education committee, chairman of the higher education committee and it was so difficult to get anything through. I did a lot of work on women's issues too. I addressed other issues too, such as the environment, but those were my main ones.

In January 1977 I was asked by the Carter administration to be on a Board to review ambassadorial appointments. That Board was abandoned by Reagan, but it was a good idea. It protects the President from people who have given him a lot of money and who then say, "Look, what are you going to do for me? I want to be ambassador to France, or what have you." So we did review, and allowed the President an escape hole for people he did not want to appoint.

When I was down there one day for a meeting I ran into an old friend who said that "I have the perfect job for you, Director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance." I had twenty-five million dollars and could get more, if necessary, out of Congress and go around the world. I love to travel, and to go places that nobody goes, like Bangladesh, and help people. It was just great. It was a real education.

Q: So you were appointed by President Carter?

MARTINDELL: To be Director of the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance.

Q: When were you selected to be ambassador?

MARTINDELL: That was two years later, in 1979. One of the people on the Ambassadorial board, Carol Laise, rang me up one day and said, “There are three posts coming up, would you be interested in having your name put forward?” One was Canada, and it was improbable that I would be appointed there. It would have been hard for me, I had lived there, Phil Habib told me that he had served in both Canada and New Zealand, and that New Zealand was much more interesting. We decided that they would put my name forward for New Zealand. Sri Lanka was the third possibility. So because everybody knew me on the board, the President had known me in the campaign, everyone agreed to the appointment.

Q: How were you trained? Did you have any training at the Foreign Service Institute?

MARTINDELL: It was very inadequate. I have wondered about that later. Shirley Temple thought about that too, and did something about it. I saw her last May in Prague. It was mid-term and I suppose they thought it was just not that important. We had two days and the second day was all at the CIA, and that was all. I was lucky because I had a political background. You use very similar skills. So it was not that hard for me. What was hard for me, and I will tell you this objectively, was the economic part of the mission. If I had not been lucky enough to have had Dick Imus as economic officer I would have been in trouble. I should have been trained in that. Books should have been recommended to me. There were some on the history of New Zealand, but nothing about economics. I have learned since. I learned through reading our reports from the U.S.-New Zealand Council which I founded, but I did not know much then. Through this Council, because the people who are supporters of it are interested in the economics, I learned. But I did not know it in 1979. The New Zealanders had very serious reservations about any woman, the New Zealanders are very chauvinistic. The business community had no interest in me at all. But

Dick handled that. You know, it was really hard for me. I was lucky because he was very good.

Q: I know Dick Imus well and he certainly is very, very good. When you arrived in New Zealand, you had as you say two days of training?

MARTINDELL: I did work with the desk officer some, Frank Bennett, and he was sharp. I liked Frank, he thought I was a great mistake. I suspect he did not think a woman could handle the job.

Q: Was he worried about your lack of economic background?

MARTINDELL: He may well have, and that would have been a valid point.

Q: And yet, he would not have been in a position to do anything about it. When you arrived in New Zealand, how did you find your staff?

MARTINDELL: They were good, I have the greatest respect for them. Now I did inherit a deputy.

Q: Who was it?

MARTINDELL: It was the one who was already there, Teresa Healy. I think she resented me because I was a woman who did not know much. That was not a happy relationship, and Dick Holbrooke, the Assistant Secretary, made a deal with the Foreign Service in which he wanted to have Burton Levin in Hong Kong, as Consul. Levin is now retired and has opened the office of the Asia Society. I think it was very important to have him there and so Dick talked me into having Teresa Healy, as my deputy and not choosing somebody else. She was there about ten months with me and then I did choose Charlie Salmon who was terrific. He was wonderful and then Dick Dols was my political officer. He wasn't as good as Imus but he was good.

Q: He was well-versed in Commonwealth politics.

MARTINDELL: So I was very lucky with my staff, with that one exception of the DCM. She was bright, but she did resent me, and that was very clear—Oh God, it was so lonely those first months, I was there by myself, I had a wonderful old aunt with me who has just turned 91, she has recently become a great grandmother. She spent a lot of time with me out there.

Q: No other family?

MARTINDELL: The family visited, my children all visited, but that was for three weeks at a time. My eldest son went out with me in the beginning which was very nice and he stayed two weeks and then my aunt came, and then when she left after six weeks one of the children came. New Zealand is a funny place, it takes a long time to get to be friends. They spend their weekends doing things as a family. But that does not mean including some one you don't know very well. I had to get to know them a lot better before I was included.

Q: It seems to me that my recollection is that we, the inspectors, came in November 1980 before the election and my recollection is that you were very well-known in the community and had a wide circle.

MARTINDELL: By then I did. I took Carol Laise's advice. That came up at the time of the ambassadorial board, she was explaining to the Board (she was the head of the Foreign Service at that time) that many ambassadors would stay in the capitol and go the social rounds with other diplomats and never get out into the country and therefore not know what was going on, and what the people were thinking. So I figured that I had a pretty good staff in place. Healy was competent, but it was just that our relationship was not good. So I did not have any worry about leaving Wellington and I knew that the two Dicks were very good so that it really was not necessary for me to be there every day. I made a point every time anybody asked me to make a speech I would accept the

invitation. Sometimes I would stir them up. I got around the country a lot. I got to know a lot of people. My aunt wrote home that I had a facility for putting people at ease right away, laugh and joke and make them feel comfortable. You need that in New Zealand, they do not feel very comfortable talking with Americans. There was latent anti-Americanism at that time, and I think that if I had not traveled around as much as I did I would have not been aware of it. That latent anti- American feeling, which has increased since the anti-nuclear ship ban.

Q: The ship thing—the nuclear energy thing—was not quite at the surface when you were there?

MARTINDELL: No, it wasn't, but it was there. I was shown a film shortly after I got there of a submarine coming into Falkland harbor, it was terrifying, little boats going right across the bow, one crazy woman with a baby in her arms in a little boat. They say the captain's face was the color of milk. He was only going four knots an hour to avoid the protesters.

Q: This was a protest?

MARTINDELL: A protest. They also told me, that Muldoon, who was then the prime minister and was very close to Selden, who was my predecessor, would go to Selden and say, “I need a ship, I need a ship”. He wanted one so he could send the police out to clobber the protesters. This would build up his constituency, which was basically the men sitting around drinking beer in a bar. 'Oh, he's tough.” Some citizens thought he did it on purpose. Nobody dared say it out loud, but he did it. The result was that the peace movement in New Zealand was so successful, that was the reason. I remember going with Dick Dols to a Labor conference. They had a “remit” that was what it was called a resolution. They passed it. It said that New Zealand “would not allow any nuclear ship in New Zealand ports, New Zealand would be nuclear free”. I remember Dick being worried about it, but at the time I sort of discounted it. He was right to be worried because then it really grew and grew.

Q: Of course this was being reported to the Department?

MARTINDELL: I imagine Dick reported it. I do not now remember.

Q: Did you find the Department supportive and responsive while you were there?

MARTINDELL: We were far away and there were no difficult problems so I think that the Department did not worry much about New Zealand, and that was probably correct, there were a lot of other problems in other places.

Q: At the same time, as you said, you were seeing a weakness in the U.S.-New Zealand relationship.

MARTINDELL: I did, but I did not think it would happen as soon as it did. I was given two assignments. The important one was to get to know the members of the Labour Party because Selden had given orders that no one was to speak to a member of the Labour Party because “they are all communists”. Dick Dols did not have to pay that much attention, he would have to sneak around to see anybody in the Labour Party, and that was probably obvious to later Prime Ministers. So instituted lunches at the chancery, the place where we worked, so we had to bring in food from the residence. My chauffeur, Joe Breen would bring in food and serve it very elegantly. We would have six or eight people and I made sure that we would have at least once every single member of the Labour Party. And then we had, of course, members of the National Party, with whom we had no problem in those days. They were not anti-nuclear.

Q: The National Party was Muldoon's party. They had a large majority?

MARTINDELL: I can't remember, I'll have to check it. It was pretty big, but I don't think it is as big as it is now. The man who is now the trade minister said to me, “If we had not switched our position on the nuclear issue we would have been elected with only a fifteen majority and not thirty-eight”. I said, “What's wrong with a fifteen majority, for heaven's

sake?" He said, "A lot, I would not have any members of the Labour Party in Parliament if I had my way."

Q: My recollection is that while you were there Muldoon was being challenged.

MARTINDELL: Yes, by Brian Tallboys, deputy Prime Minister. Things would have been a lot different if Tallboys were prime minister, he is a real gent, a wonderful man, but his health was not good and he did not push the caucus revolt.

Q: Was he out of the country? I know that Muldoon was at the royal wedding or in China or something.

MARTINDELL: Yes, he was traveling. As I remember what he said publicly that it was the will of the caucus, but he was not going to encourage it, and he didn't. They were scared of Muldoon. So he did not get to be prime minister.

Q: It was the National Party trying to pull a Margaret Thatcher, wasn't it? They were trying to move Muldoon to the side.

MARTINDELL: Yes. They were scared of him, they did not like him.

Q: Then he had a big rally on front of the building in Wellington and he had quite a mob. I remember being on the edge of this and he was talking and he was coming back after his trip.

MARTINDELL: I had forgotten that.

Q: Then the next day he made all sorts of press statements, saying what a wonderful response he had had, but we as kind of tourists walking around it was towards five or five thirty at the end of the day and heard part of this speech. It was not quite as effusive as the papers said.

Wellington itself, you said you traveled outside the city, seemed to be almost not part of New Zealand but at five thirty every body went home. Restaurants mainly were only open at lunchtime.

MARTINDELL: On weekends it was dead as a doornail. But that was true of all New Zealand, but now things have changed. Auckland was different. Christchurch was dead as a doornail. I remember Henry Kamm, I think his name was, came out from the New York Times, and wrote an article about how there was not a citizen on the streets, there was no place to eat in Christchurch on weekends.

I am usually pretty tactful, but I did make some remarks on my first visit to Christchurch that it was my favorite city. I just did not think that this statement about it would be reported back to the other papers. The mayor of Wellington was my friend and was hurt, but we made up. I should not have said that publicly, it was a mistake.

Q: We had in Christchurch a consular agent?

MARTINDELL: Yes, Malcolm Ott, a very good friend, as a matter of fact I visited them just a while ago. He was very good. I don't know if he was appreciated. There was a move on, I heard, to get rid of him and to have the USIA people do the work. That is crazy. He is paid a pittance. Mike Mansfield told me that we used to have a lot of consular agents around the world. Malcolm, I think he told me once, was paid $3,500 a year. You don't get a consulate for that. You know what you pay for staff. He just uses his own office.

Q: And his own secretary, and he keeps the most meticulous records so that he charges us only for the time he uses in fifteen minutes increments.

MARTINDELL: I will put that in my book. I should put much more about him in it. He is wonderful.

Q: The consular officer in Wellington told me that he was satisfied with him and his reports were fine.

MARTINDELL: I think the reason they were considering getting rid of Malcolm was that they were trying to have someway to use the USIA people more than they were used. Right after I left they were removed from Christchurch. Then they had to go back again.

Q: The south island is a big island.

MARTINDELL: It does not have as much population. One third of the population is in Auckland. It is quite top-heavy. I decided I was going to study Maori and Dick was going to study it with me, we did not learn much. I had a speech all ready and I went up to my teacher's Marae for the weekend. I took my children, and my son-in-law who is a professor at Ann Arbor and very versed in talking to ethnic people. They stayed up quite late talking to the visiting tribe that was there, and because I was there I could not make my speech, Dick did, because in their culture they could not have me talk to them. I was OK with my teachers who were university types. They were young students from Waikato University and they talked to my son-in- law at length over beer and it was the first time I became aware that there was trouble between the Maoris and the Pakeha, or Europeans".

After Alan talked with these types I was really worried and thought that it was going to be a repeat of our civil rights situation in the South. It did not prove to be, and that was a plus for the Labour Government when they came in. They handled race relations much better than the National Party. So tension had diminished, but in 1980 it looked like it might flash up. So I told all this to Henry Kamm. He said, give me a week and I will do some investigating and I will be in Auckland and we can have lunch. So we had lunch, and he said, "In the last two days I have spent time visiting islanders, and Maori. This morning I had coffee with a Maori family, and let me tell you about them. The father was out of work, the mother was out of work, there was an eighteen year old daughter who had worked briefly, but she was out of work. They had the three "government dole" salaries—there

were several younger children—but I grew up in Queens, New York in a middle class family. I asked these people what their income was from the government, and how much they paid for groceries, for rent and so forth?" He said, "They ended up with what would be a middle class income in Queens. What are they complaining about?" He said there is not going to be any trouble. Well there was some trouble, but it was not based on economics, but more on attitudes.

Q: It was the Labour Government that was elected after Muldoon's government?

MARTINDELL: Not the '81 election, but in '84. On my final call on Muldoon, He said that "we are going to win easily". The leader of the opposition was Bill Rowling who said, "we are going to win, but it is not going to be easy."

Q: Now the National Party did win one more time.

MARTINDELL: They did win, and then... It was really very bad when that happened in 1984, the Reagan administration made a very unfortunate choice when they sent Monroe Browne there as ambassador. He was Southern Californian, even more right wing than Selden; he really passionately believed that Labour people were out and out communists and out to do us in. We had planned to have the ANZUS meeting there, it was New Zealand's turn. It had been planned before Muldoon had called the election, and when it appeared clear it would be in June just around the time of the election it was suggested to Monroe Browne that he postpone the meeting but he went ahead. What happened was that the ANZUS meeting was to start on Monday after the Saturday election but the new government did not take over for five days and so the old government was a lame duck government. The people who came to the meeting were not the people who were to be in charge. In other words, it was a mess, there were all sorts of misunderstandings. Shultz did see Lange and it is reported that Lange said, "Don't send any ships for six months, I think I can work it out with my caucus." There are very conflicting stories about what happened. I do believe that he said that. I believe that he was less gung ho on the anti-

nuclear thing than he became later because it became a useful politically. Lange liked dancing on the world stage. He became much stronger on that issue than when he started out. He had to have known that it was going to cause terrible problems for New Zealand, he is not dumb.

It could not have been worse. Then Secretary of the Navy Lehman would make anti-New Zealand remarks and there would be big headlines in New Zealand—I suppose that anybody who has never lived outside the United States does not realize that the slightest breath said here gets exaggerated when it gets overseas. It just got worse and worse and I don't know if we will ever work our way out of it.

Q: Did you have the feeling that when you were there that the anti-American feeling had to do with something to do with more than the nuclear thing?

MARTINDELL: Oh, Vietnam. There is no question, and that is why I was very popular there because it was well- known that I had been anti the Vietnam war. I had a hard time reaching the young people, anybody my age and social circumstances, and our officer, John Williams, who was that age was sent out, but he was very conservative, so that did not help. We should have been reversed—he should have been the ambassador and I should have been the young person going out. Anyway, I only made one speech which was at the very end of my tenure, which Charlie was very nervous about, it was a pro-peace, anti-nuclear speech in a way. I made it to Waikato University, which I think is largely Maori. [The speech was to warn them not to follow Milton Freidman philosophy.]

Skipping back to when I visited the Maori, what you do at night you sleep mattress to mattress on the floor and I put my shoes by my pillow. When I got up in the morning I could not find them. I asked the students who were cleaning up if they could keep an eye out for them, but they never found them. I did have another pair. I heard from my teacher that they are now enshrined in a glass case in Waikato University. As you see I do not have Cinderella-sized feet and I am a little embarrassed. I have never seen them.

Anyway that is where I made the speech. I don't know what I said that Charlie was so nervous about. He thought I would be recalled. I would not have been recalled two weeks before I was due to leave anyway. He would not distribute it, but I thought it was a good thing for me to say that as I was leaving, to leave the feeling that there were some Americans who weren't so conservative, and did not endorse the Reagan philosophy, a revolt of the rich against the poor.

Q: So the resentment about the Vietnam War had lingered and lingered?

MARTINDELL: You see, the government that was elected in '84 were all young. The oldest Cabinet Member was in his late 40s and Lange himself was 42, and there were several in their 30s. They did not know anything else about the U.S. The older New Zealand generation, of course, remembered the Coral Sea battle, but by that time they were out of power and had very little influence. So our friends were diminished and this new generation, all they focused on was the Vietnam war, we made them go and they did not want to and so the younger generation was increasingly anti- American. It certainly was not helped by all the remarks here about their views.

Q: While you were there we were suffering through the hostage situation in Tehran.

MARTINDELL: Indeed, that was a dark cloud over that entire time.

Q: Did the Department ask you to ...

MARTINDELL: I was to take various messages to the Prime Minister. They still are helpful to us in the UN, as they always have been. So right after Afghanistan I had a message from the Department to tell the Prime Minister something about a resolution in the UN, I could not find him, only the caretaker. It was Christmas and New Zealand goes to sleep. The official response at that time was fine, the anti-nuclear policy was popular, it has gone up to nearly eighty percent now. It started out about fifty-two percent but because of the bad way it was handled it has gone up to something like seventy-eight percent. So it really

is a problem for us and I don't know how we are going to work it out. Hopefully, if we don't get into a war over Kuwait, the gossip is among the Arabists that Saddam Hussein will have the people out on streets and they will shout “Peace, peace” and he will bow to “the will of the people”.

Q: One of the other issues that you mentioned when you began was the economic one. Did you find in New Zealand an isolated feeling?

MARTINDELL: Oh, very. That is their main problem, they are very isolated. At that time it was the most over-regulated country in the world. There was a regulation for everything. It was very hard to get anything imported.

Q: How did that come about? Did it come from the National Party?

MARTINDELL: Oh yes. Every time there was a problem Muldoon would put in another regulation. He left them with a terrible debt—more per capita than many of the LDCs [lesser developed countries]. This has been a problem for the Labour government. They wanted to pay back this inherited debt.

Q: Where did this debt come from?

MARTINDELL: The National Party borrowed, mainly from the banks of New York who lent them money.

Q: What did they do with the money?

MARTINDELL: They have a problem. It is an agricultural economy. They are the most efficient farmers in the world. Therefore they are in competition with us and the EEC, that was their major problem. When Britain went into the EEC they lost their guaranteed market. And I was told by a professor there, a very bright American, he felt that they did not make enough effort for new markets. I do remember Brian Tallboys was on the road all the time trying to sell butter, as he would say, but all sorts of products as well. They did

develop a market in the Arab countries for lamb and there was just the slightest change in their support of us there. Although they were helpful in the hostage situation.

Q: The CER, you mentioned, was the solution that Muldoon and Fraser came to after the EEC was formed?

MARTINDELL: I would guess the EEC was formed in the early 70s but I am not sure.

Q: I know that the meeting between Fraser and Muldoon was in November of 1979. They met several times in 1980. I did not know that the CER continued and was successful.

MARTINDELL: It was highly successful. Australia is now their biggest trading partner. There was always the three of us, the United States, Japan and Australia, and it would shift a bit. I think the Australian part is highly successful. Of course Australia is also in bad shape, if not worse, now.

Q: I read that in 1981 the U.S. Department of Agriculture sold 220,000,000 pounds of butter to New Zealand, do you remember that strange little incident?

MARTINDELL: No. Really.

Q: I read that 220,000,000 were sold, this is just before you left in 1981. I had never seen anything like that before. New Zealand could sell the butter to a third party whereas we couldn't.

MARTINDELL: I certainly don't remember it. That does not mean it did not happen. That is amazing because they were having so much trouble selling their own butter. I left in May.

Q: This could have been in the summer after you left. I think it was, in July or August. While you were there wasn't Haig Secretary of State and didn't he come out to New Zealand once?

MARTINDELL: He may have, but not when I was there. I was lucky because my husband had known Haig, he had raised money for him when he was thinking about running for president. Ambassadors got the two week telegram— everybody but me, got the two week telegram right after inauguration saying “You have to be out of your post by February 15th.” I heard about that and so called Jackson, my husband, saying I really would like to stay for a couple of reasons, one was that my son had started a Seattle- Christchurch Sister City Committee, and Speaker O'Neill was bringing a CODEL.

I think that telegram had killed Barbara Watson, she had just gotten out to Malaysia and she died shortly thereafter, it was terrible. You could not be polite, you could not make your final calls. Dave Newsom told me that not only did they do that, which he tried to talk them out of, but they had on the desk of every political employee, there were two thousand or so of them in the State Department, on the desk of each one of those was placed an order saying “you are to clear out your desk in twenty-four hours”. Two days after inauguration.

Q: Did this come from the White House?

MARTINDELL: It came from the transition team. He went to the transition team and said, “for God's sake, these are political appointees at those levels, most of them, that will have to be confirmed by the Senate. First you will have to choose them, second you will have to get them confirmed. Who is going to mind the store?” So they rescinded that order.

Q: To end the story, you said the Speaker [of the House] Tip O'Neill was coming out.

MARTINDELL: So I called my husband and said it was rather rude for there to be no ambassador in place. It was the largest congressional delegation that had come out for some time. Jackson said, “I'll call Al Haig”. And I had a very nice letter back saying I could stay. Maybe the letter did not say exactly that, but the feeling of the Department was that

I could stay while the new Ambassador was getting ready. In the end I did leave in May. I stopped in the Cook Islands and took a holiday in Tahiti.

Q: So O'Neill did come out. What was the CODEL for?

MARTINDELL: It was the Speaker's trip. The Speaker has a trip ever year and Scotty Reston, who was a good friend, said, “I'm not opposed to junkets—they usually learn something.” Anyway they came, they had been in Australia first. I think it was a good thing I was there. Tip O'Neill got off the plane and gave me a big hug and said, “We are the last Democrats left”. It was a bipartisan group, Silvio Conte [Republican of Massachusetts], a great buddy of the Speaker, was along.

Q: Were there any demonstrations when this CODEL came, or was it quiet. They did not connect the nuclear ship issue with the representatives?

MARTINDELL: No, as long as they were not carrying bombs in the suitcase. The inconsistent thing about the New Zealand stance is that in Christchurch, which is heavily dependent on the Antarctica operation, there is nothing said about the U.S. planes that land there, which do not carry bombs, but they could. Labour's argument is that they don't want anything that could carry nuclear weapons such as ships. So when it is to their advantage, they keep quiet.

Q: I was going to ask you about that base.

MARTINDELL: Recently there was a CODEL that came there, it was headed by Bob Rowe of New Jersey, Chairman of the Science Committee for Technology, which is why they were focusing on Christchurch. Malcolm Ott had talked to some of them, it was a bipartisan group too, and they just had the Secretary of Agriculture testify before them, and he had said either in the meeting, or in informally talking to them, “We are going to have an agricultural surplus and we would be less eager to fight for New Zealand in the GATT

talks. If those talks fail New Zealand will become an LDC. It will really ruin New Zealand which is marginal anyway."

Q: That Antarctic base will be even more important than it is now? I remember seeing a whole slew of Japanese tourists or scientists all in a single line getting into the bomb bay door of one of these huge planes for a trip.

MARTINDELL: They must have been scientists. Officially nobody else goes. Oh, yes, it is terrible, just recently you can pay $25,000 and land at the South Pole.

Q: The other planes that were going were only circling and coming back?

MARTINDELL: Tourist flights don't go to the Antarctic any more. One of my first experiences down there was in 1979 when that Air New Zealand plane crashed. Lange has written a book in which he said the only time he was asked to the American embassy was the night they knew that the tourist plane crashed. The dinner broke up. Naturally we were very upset. Sometime before, the Navy captain had come to me, he was the captain in charge, and he said, "Please Ambassador, will you go to the highest level of the government, something dreadful is going to happen, and we will have to rescue the victims." I think it was three months later that the crash killed 257.

Q: It was a sightseeing DC-10 that crashed on November 28th. It was already the third fatal crash of 1979 in Antarctica. The others must have been smaller planes.

MARTINDELL: They canceled the tourist flights after that, and then there was a cover up. A judge called it an "orchestrated litany of lies."

Q: Had you left before the problem with the South African rugby team?

MARTINDELL: Just before. I remember when I said goodbye to the dean of the cathedral of Christchurch, he was going out to march in protest. And they turned out an enormous

crowd. It was another Muldoon thing, he was stubborn about that. He was a rugby fan, he wanted them to come. I can't remember if they actually came, did they?

Q: Yes they did. I remember the reports all through that summer, of course it was winter down there, you often don't see in Canada a lot of New Zealand news, but I remember seeing headlines saying "Worst riots of the century" or something like that.

MARTINDELL: Actually they were more violent than the peace demonstrations, they had the core of the same people, the peace people, and people that you never would have thought, like the dean of the cathedral, would get out and march with them.

Q: Muldoon was reacting to this (it was just after you left) threatening to call a general election. I don't understand his thinking there.

MARTINDELL: When he clobbered protesters his stock went up.

Q: Is that right?

MARTINDELL: So he probably figured that he would win an even bigger majority if he did that.

I signed a treaty dealing with thirty some islands when I was there. It was not a treaty that had been negotiated by us. We relinquished claims to all but one of the islands, and that was called Jennings Island, which was off American Samoa. I put in my book that my grandmother's name was Jennings and she did have an ancestor who was a ship captain. I did meet one of the descendants, a Polynesian, and I wondered if the ship captain had stopped by. We kept that island but the others we gave up and that is why we had that treaty and the signing. I can't now remember, I will have to check, why we had to sign it in the Tokelau Islands. The islands are three tiny little islands a day's sail north of Samoa. It was a protectorate of New Zealand so the foreign affairs people arranged for me to go up there. They are tiny little atolls around a lagoon. You can't take an airplane—you could

take a seaplane—and there is one boat that goes once a month. It is an old tin tub. So they lent me, for the trip, one of their frigates called the Atago. We got on it, Dick Dols and I, and the permanent head of foreign affairs in Wellington, Frank Corner, and we sailed all night. They gave me the captain's cabin, I protested, but they said “We can't have a woman, even if she is the American ambassador, going down to the head with all the men”. It was the only private bathroom on the ship. They also told me that I was sleeping on the sheets that Princess Margaret had, the only other woman to have sailed on the ship. I felt very honored.

We sailed all night and got to the first island about six in the morning. I did not have to get up to welcome the chief, but I did. He came on the ship with an entourage, elders and so forth and seventeen women—I don't know what they did about those women and the head—they just sat around in the passage way. We got to the next island and it was the same procedure. And then we got to the last island, it was called Atafu, about nine in the morning. The only way you can land is to get on a little boat off the ship because of the huge waves. They said, “Don't worry about that, the strong men of the island come out and they catch the boat in the waves so it won't overturn.” They sent the communications team first and they overturned. Somehow or other they did not mess up all their equipment, it was encased. After they landed they got on the radio and said, “We don't think the ambassador should come and go through what we did.” So that was relayed to the chiefs on the ship and somebody suggested that maybe we will declare the deck of the ship to be Tokelau territory and we can sign it here. That did not suit them at all. There were discussions that went on and on, finally so Frank Corner said, “I don't care what you decide, but you have got to decide. We can't just sit here all day.” So it was finally decided that I would go. I was awfully glad that I did. They had taken so much trouble, they had raked the paths, they had hung beautiful baskets on the trees and so forth. Well I was standing on the top of the ladder before getting on the boat when one of the officers said to me, “By the way Ambassador, can you swim?” I laughed and said “What if I couldn't”. I do swim quite well, but nobody offered me a life jacket, and I was in my sixties. I did

get in the boat and they did catch us. I wore pants to get in and changed to a dress later. We had speeches. Frank Corner spoke and it was translated, then I spoke and it was translated, and then the older chief from the first island got up and spoke. Apparently he spent the first half complaining that we had taken too much of his time, he was angry. I did not know what he was saying until later. Then we had the signing. Then we had the feast. A Polynesian feast has to have a roast pig. The pigs on those islands are fishing pigs, they go out on the rocks and sort of paw for shell fish, so the pigs taste quite fishy. We were just getting on with the feast when the captain radioed to his communicators that he could see on his radar a big storm, and I was to be brought back immediately. Well, immediately in Polynesia is quite a long time, and with all the politenesses it was an hour before I could break away and get into the little boat. It was then really very rough, and we made it to the side of the ship—we were in a wooden fishing boat, and to ensure my safety they lashed the boats together and I would walk across their decks and jump to the ladder so I got that far and they called to me and said, “When we say jump, you jump!” They were very firm. When they said jump, I didn't. I could see this wall of water many, many feet above my head and I drew back. Which was a damned good thing because where I had been standing was a little cockleshell of a boat crushed against the side of the frigate and I would have broken maybe both legs, certainly one. They did not have a doctor on board, it would have been a mess. By the time I did jump and made it and climbed up to where the captain was waiting he had been obviously concerned thinking about how he could explain if he lost or injured the American ambassador.

There are two main Pacific organizations; one is the Pacific Basin Economic Cooperation which is PBEC and the other is, I can't remember exactly, the PCEC. Brian Tallboys was the head of the first one, the PBEC for quite awhile, he is very interested in it and thinks that is very important for New Zealand, which it is. It includes them in whatever goes on in the basin, because they are so far away and isolated.

Q: Do they feel that the United States does not pay enough attention to the Pacific Basin? Is that a source of trouble?

MARTINDELL: No, I think the United States pays a lot of attention to the Pacific Basin, but it is concentrated largely on Japan and Korea. The South Pacific is the tail of the dog.

Q: Do you recall when the Soviet ambassador was expelled?

MARTINDELL: I remember that extremely well. I have a wonderful story about him with my aunt. They accused her of having a flirtation with him. I observed them at the Chinese embassy, he was raising his glass across the crowded room. She said it was not an enchanted evening, however. He was a charming man. I liked him, he was humorous. In fact there was a lunch party which the Egyptian ambassador gave in which he got up and made a toast to the superpowers. Ambassador Sofinsky was there. So I leaned across the ample bosom of the high commissioner of Samoa and shook hands with Sofinsky and said, “Hi superpower.” The rumor was reported in the papers, although the government always denied it, that he was the head of the KGB in New Zealand. A New Zealand official said that they never have the ambassador as the head of the KGB, it is usually the chauffeur. I don't think he was KGB. He made a response to the toast that had been made by our host, by saying, “As the head KGB I salute you.” Then I got up and said, “As the head of the CIA, I also salute you”. He was a very funny man. He was born in Kiev. I think he came from a distinguished family. I invited him and his wife for tea one day, which made my CIA very nervous. I had a picture of my family from an earlier time, my mother and her sisters in the very pretty dresses that girls wore in the early years of the century. He asked who they were, and he said nothing further. He became very sentimental, and his eyes almost filled with tears after seeing that picture. I figured he came from the kind of family whose little girls would have been dressed up in pretty dresses like that. I think he came from a sort of aristocratic family. His brother, his twin brother, was very high in the Soviet hierarchy, not the KGB. So he was very well-connected.

After I left, when I was back on a visit, I ran into the DCM from the USSR at a party and I said, “What happened to Ambassador Sofinsky? Is he in disgrace, having been thrown out?” He said, “No, he is a hero. He was then posted to Geneva.” 'The claim was that they had observed him, however the spooks do it, handing $10,000 to—at that point there were only three known Communists in New Zealand, and one of them was a fellow named Anderson, who was the head of a labor union—he was very leftist, there is no question about that—they claimed they saw him getting $10,000 from this guy. So Muldoon threw him out. I was always a little skeptical. Our CIA guy claimed it was true.

Q: Muldoon was convinced that these Communists were behind the labor unrest?

MARTINDELL: The labor unions are radical in New Zealand, but their power has been diminished, even by the Labour government, but they come out of the British left- labor tradition, and most of them left England because they were anti-everything. You run into it in Australia and Canada. The ones who left England were more left than the ones who stayed. They were bad guys, Anderson was the most leftish. It was very hard to deal with them.

I should tell you, I've noticed here that when I was nominated to go to the Senate in New Jersey that I had to have the labor unions' endorsement, as Democrats do. But they do not like women, particularly women in important places. This was doubly true in New Zealand, and unfortunately—I don't know if this came up in the inspection—we had a pathetic young man as our labor officer. We discovered that he had a brain tumor and later he died—he was not able to deal with them, that area was not well covered while I was there. No matter how good I was, if I had been good, I could not have reached these guys.

Sonia Davis was the head of one of the unions, she was a woman, and we got along, but the others did not like to talk to me, I was the enemy, in their view.

Q: Did they not protest the expelling of their friend, the Soviet ambassador or did they just keep quiet?

MARTINDELL: I don't remember their protesting, they may have or may not have. I don't know how the rest of the unions were. They were anti-establishment not communist. Anderson was a communist, he was known to be. I don't remember which union he led.

One thing I did try to do was to get labor people from here to go to New Zealand, and I did not succeed. I went to Lane Kirkland, he was then the head of the AFL-CIO and he said he could not come. You know, they never would give me a straight answer. They would say, “Maybe”. The ones they should have sent out would have been the sort of leftist ones who could have communicated with those in New Zealand, but they didn't. They did not send anybody. It would have been very helpful to me if they had.

Q: Well, you did not have many visits?

MARTINDELL: I had quite a few, but not CODELs. I had Secretary of the Interior Andrus who came. Jim Woolsey, who was Secretary of the Navy, I had Ruben Askew, who had been head of that ambassadorial board and was STR—I had gotten to know him quite well, but not CODELs.

Q: It was about the middle of your tour, in 1980 when the Olympics in Moscow were scheduled. Do you recall the response in New Zealand to Carter's decision not to participate in them [due to the invasion of Afghanistan]. New Zealand voted to compete.

MARTINDELL: I had forgotten that.

Q: I remember that they did go to Moscow, but they did refuse to carry the New Zealand flag.

MARTINDELL: I do remember now, they did refuse to carry the New Zealand flag.

Q: They carried a black flag.

MARTINDELL: That also reminds me of something in connection with the labor movement. The Soviets invited some labor leader from New Zealand to Moscow and wined him and dined him and gave him a very good time. He came back with glowing statements about how everything was. In New Zealand they were rather naive. Moscow was sending people out all the time, people to cozy up to labor. That is what I said to Lane Kirkland, but I guess he just did not think it was important.

Q: Sometimes we are very insular in America.

MARTINDELL: It got to our level about the growing anti-nuclear movement, but I don't think it was taken very seriously above that level.

Q: Well, thank you very much, Madam Ambassador.

MARTINDELL: The Foreign Service seems to be like a family, you don't miss your family when you have your built-in family.

Q: You do have a built-in family, we do take care of each other. You may not have seen it as much at the post you were because it was not a hardship post.

MARTINDELL: One of the things that Teresa Healy was good at was working with the wives. They were not allowed to work, and she got through dispensation from the New Zealand government allowing them to work. New Zealanders do not warm to you for quite a long time, and so the wives were really lonesome and bored. Once they got to work the problems disappeared.

Q: It is a serious problem. We are educating women today in greater numbers and more thoroughly than we did before and we can't expect them not to use their education. I know

many dissatisfied Foreign Service wives who do not want to go overseas, and sometimes don't.

MARTINDELL: Frank Bennett's wife wouldn't go, so he didn't go for a long time.

Q: I know Foreign Service wives who are attorneys, have very important positions and in other professions. It is very difficult. I was a geographer which was something I could carry around with me as a spouse. But other professions do not lend themselves as easily for the women and for the husbands as well.

MARTINDELL: One example. A young fellow who worked for me in my senate office, he was studying at the Woodrow Wilson School at the time, he went into AID and married one of his classmates who was originally from Sri Lanka. That was very hard for her. They went overseas and at one point were in Bangladesh, where they had a baby. She virtually abandoned her career. Now she came out of the Indian culture where women don't work, so probably it was a little less hard on her than it would have been on us. Nevertheless it could not have been easy.

Q: It seems to me that you have a good opinion of the career Foreign Service officers that you did meet as well as their wives.

MARTINDELL: I thought they were swell. There was one exception, and he was not Foreign Service, he was USIS, he really retired on the job. The next man who came out—I had fussed about it because of the anti-nuclear business and anti-Americanism, I really worried about that aspect. I just saw him quoted in the paper. His name was Charles Bell he was magnificent. That was really my main contribution that I got a lot of coverage in New Zealand. That story that you probably heard about Muldoon the Prime Minister and how he greeted me. I met him at the embassy in Washington. I noticed later, that he was very uneasy socially, especially with women. I was sitting next to him at dinner, he was just sitting there, he was not a man for small talk, so I said, “I have been reading about your legislature, I used to be in the legislature in New Jersey.” He looked sort of quietly in space

and said, “I don't like lady politicians.” It was a great welcome. It was off the record, but it was too good a story. When interviewed, I told a New York Times reporter so it came out in New Zealand when I made a “secret” trip, and Frank Bennett and Teresa Healy thought I was going to be canned. Because it came out in the paper, Muldoon was angry. But subliminally I thought he needed to know that I was angry. But I had not anticipated that anything the American ambassador said could cause headlines. He did not like me, and Teresa Healy said that “Half your job is getting along with the Prime Minister.” However, I think he respected me more than he would have otherwise, so it all worked out all right in the end.

Q: But you did get along with Tallboys?

MARTINDELL: Yes, we are still good friends and the other members of the cabinet were friends.

Q: You do go to New Zealand from time to time?

MARTINDELL: Yes, because of the U.S.-New Zealand Council.

Q: You have something to do with this?

MARTINDELL: I started it in 1986. I got together a wonderful board, a lot of the former ambassadors.

End of interview